

## WEEK 4

**THE SHEILD OF FAITH** (EPHESIANS 6:13-16)

\* Info in this message is adapted from: "Spiritual Warfare" by Tim Keller & "This is War" by JD Greear

***Ephesians 6:13–16 “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.”***

First, let me mention a few quick things about the “shoes” which is the next part of the armor. Roman soldiers were extremely careful about selecting the right shoes. Typically, they wore something that was a mix between a sandal and a boot. It had a thick sole with leather straps that secured it to their leg. And on the bottom of the soles were hobnails – something like modern day cleats – to give them traction and a firm footing.<sup>1</sup>

You see, most combat in their day was fought hand-to-hand, so firm footing was the difference between life and death. A soldier that slipped down was easy prey.

These “shoes of the gospel of peace” symbolize the peace and confidence that a Christian can have after salvation...

***Romans 5:1 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

When there is peace between you and God, and peace between you and your fellow man, it gives you “firm footing” – a confidence and readiness to live for God and share the good news of Jesus!

BUT, we’re not going to focus on the “shoes of the gospel” tonight because we just recently did a 10-week series called “LIVE SENT” where

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1993). *Drawing Near—Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith* (p. 273). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

we learned how to share the gospel, work in our testimony, and give the person a chance to respond.

We did this because we're not interested in being a youth group that stays huddled up, just trying to keep *out* the influence of the world. No, we want to be a missionary people who batter the gates of hell, and storm in with the gospel, which leads us to the next piece of armor that we'll focus on tonight – the "shield of faith."

In verse 16, Paul tells us to "take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one." So, the shield of faith symbolizes at least three things in the life of a Christian...

## **1. Our protection against the fiery attacks of Satan.**

When Paul talks about the shield of faith, he's not describing the small shield like a gladiator used. Paul is talking about the large 2.5'X5' full-body shield that Roman soldiers used in critical moments of warfare.<sup>2</sup>

You see, the Roman soldier didn't use this shield all the time. They didn't use it in hand-to-hand combat. And they didn't use it when they were fighting their way *toward* a walled city.

They used it at the critical moment when they were getting close to the city walls. That's the most dangerous place in the whole campaign because you are *unbelievably* vulnerable at that moment. You may have 10X the amount of soldiers, but when you get to the walls of their city, you are absolutely vulnerable. The people on the wall have the advantage because you're *down here*, and they're *up there!*

And this is the most desperate moment of the battle for the people on the wall because, if the attacking army breaks through/over the wall – the people inside the city are finished. So, they are DESPERATE to keep this attacking army out and they would do whatever it took to create alarm, panic, and fear in the ranks of the attacking army.

So, the people on the wall would hurl flaming objects down on the attacking soldiers like...

- **Darts/arrows that were dipped in poison and pitch (tar like substance) that was set on fire.** The poison

<sup>2</sup> Utley, R. J. (1997). *Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians)* (Vol. Volume 8, p. 140). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

would kill even if the arrow only wounded the soldier, and the fire was deadly and intimidating. You see, it would be horrible to watch the soldier next to you die from an arrow, but it would be horrifying on another level to watch their hair, face, and entire body burn up right in front of you! This was extremely intimidating, and it caused soldiers to retreat in fear.

- **Molten led, burning pitch, spears, rocks, etc.**

So, the Roman soldiers would make a canopy with their shields to stop the spears, rocks and arrows that were being launched at them from the people on the wall.

(Show pic of shield canopy)

So, Paul is using this scenario to show how the “shield of faith” can protect us from the “flaming darts/arrows” of the devil. This could be...

- Temptations hurling down on you
- Doubts
- Trials
- Persecution
- Confusion/disillusionment about the evil and suffering we see in the world

The devil launches all these “flaming arrows” at us, desperately trying to get us to retreat, hide, or give up on trusting God and walking with Him faithfully. But, the shield of faith also symbolizes...

## **2. Our partnership with other believers.**

The edges of these full-body shields were constructed so the soldiers could interlock their shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall.<sup>3</sup> Paul is giving a picture of how God’s people come together and help each other – to have each other’s back so we can be better protected from the darts of the enemy.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes, when you’re weak, your own faith isn’t strong enough to get you through a situation. Sometimes you need other believers to “shield” you with encouragement, prayer, accountability, etc. That’s why it’s SO important to be active in...

<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 58). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>4</sup> *Answers to Questions about Spiritual Warfare* by David Jeremiah, pg.105

- **The local church** (large group – *little* help & accountability)
- **Connection Classes** (smaller group – *more* help & accountability)
- **Discipleship Group / Mentor Group** (even smaller group – the *most* help & accountability)

But, the shield of faith also symbolizes...

### **3. Our unwavering belief in the promises of God.**

We have no power on our own to “shield” ourselves from the arrows of the enemy. God Himself is our shield. The Lord told Abraham, “Fear not, I am your shield” (Gen. 15:1).

***Psalm 18:30 “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.”***

***Proverbs 30:5 “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”***

***Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”***

The shield of faith represents our unwavering belief in the promises of “things not seen,” which is why we’re calling this series “The Invisible War.” If you keep reading Hebrews 11, you’ll see people in the Bible who had unwavering faith in the promises of God even though Satan was hurling “flaming arrows” of doubt and discouragement at them...

- **Noah** (vs.7)

God promised Noah that a global flood was coming and, by faith, Noah believed God even though the world had never seen rain at that point. It was an event “yet unseen.” He worked for 120 years building the Ark because he believed God’s promise was true.

And I’m sure the flaming darts of ridicule, doubt, and discouragement were continually raining down on Noah and his family. But they “took up” their shields of faith and trusted God anyway. And, because of their faith in God’s promise, they were the only eight people who survived the global Flood.

- **Abraham** (vs. 8; 17-19)

Abraham followed God's call even though he didn't know where he was going. By faith, he walked away from his home, his friends and everything he had ever known. Then, when God asked him to give up his only son, Abraham had enough faith to believe that God could raise Isaac back from the dead if necessary!

And I'm sure the flaming darts of fear, doubt, and discouragement were raining down on Abraham when he was about to kill his only son. But he AND Isaac took up their shields of faith and deflected those flaming arrows – trusting God's promise with unwavering faith.

- **Moses** (vs.24-26; 29)

Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace (Ex. 2:1-10) and could have lived out his life in comfort and ease, but he chose to obey God rather than to "enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." He led two million Jews out of slavery, through countless trials, and ultimately to the Promised Land.

But Moses had to continually take up the shield of faith and deflect the doubts, discouragement, and rebellion of his critics.

- **Joshua** (vs.30)

Joshua was a valiant warrior and military commander. Can you imagine what the Israelite army thought when he told them they would conquer the city of Jericho without lifting a finger to fight?

I'm sure the flaming arrows of doubt were raining down on Joshua and all the other heroes of the faith throughout human history. But they all took up the shield of faith and deflected the devil's lies, temptations, and accusations. They trusted God's Word and obeyed Him at ALL cost!

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### Small Groups